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## SPECIFIC VARIANTS OF GOLD AND SILVER EARLY ZWIEBELKNOPF FIBULAE FROM EASTERN SERBIA

*Abstract.* – The discovery of fragmented silver fibula with twice bent bow in the necropolis by the castellum Ravna (*Timacum Minus*) as well as inspection of some specimens of gold zwiebelknopf fibulae from the collections of the National Museum in Belgrade and Museum of Krajina in Negotin have drawn our attention to some finds of gold and silver fibulae from eastern Serbia and Romania that, according to their shape and decoration, represent specific variants in the initial phase of development of the zwiebelknopf fibulae. They are classified into three groups on the basis of their typological traits and their production is connected to Aurelian's withdrawal from Dacia (group I), Diocletian's victories over barbarians in the Danube basin (group II) and Constantine's *decennalia*, i.e. his preparations for encounter with Licinius (group III).

*Key words.* – zwiebelknopf fibulae, imperial donations, gold jewelry, silver jewelry.

The discovery of fragmented silver fibula with twice bent bow in the necropolis by the castellum Ravna (*Timacum Minus*),<sup>1</sup> as well as inspection of some specimens of gold zwiebelknopf fibulae from the collections of the National Museum in Belgrade<sup>2</sup> and Museum of Krajina in Negotin,<sup>3</sup> have drawn our attention to some finds of gold and silver fibulae from eastern Serbia and Romania that, according to their shape and decoration, represent specific variants in the initial phase of development of the zwiebelknopf fibulae. These are the fibulae some specimens of which, according to one group of scholars, represent the specific variant of fibulae with long hinged frame<sup>4</sup> or in the recent literature the zwiebelknopf fibulae of type I, as well as the fibulae with semicircular plate on the head (*Kopfplatte*), attributed also to the distinct variant of this type.<sup>5</sup> As this type is generally dated between the years 280 and 320 AD, although there are some fibulae from closed associations dated in 250s,<sup>6</sup> it is rather long time span for the occurrence of relatively small number of similar specimens. However, as these fibulae were made of precious metals, gold, silver and gilded bronze and silver they, by all appearances, were donations to meritorious soldiers or civilians, so their occurrence must be studied within

certain historical context. These fibulae are particularly interesting because of their ornamental combinations and, as after new discoveries and correct identification of earlier finds their number considerably increased, we classified them into three basic groups, according to their typological characteristics.

### FIBULAE WITH TWICE BENT BOW

This group of fibulae originates from the bronze specimens with same bow construction terminating as stylized animal heads and with through-shaped pin

<sup>1</sup> Fibula will be published in the monograph: Petković, Ružić, Jovanović, Vuksan, Zoffmann (in print). I wish to express my gratitude to Sofija Petković for giving me information about the inventory of the grave where the fibula was found.

<sup>2</sup> Popović, 1996, cat. 147; Popović, 2001, cat. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Popović, 2003, 67, fig. 24. In this paper it is noted that fibula has been found in Prahovo (*Aquae*). This is wrong, because in latter research we have concluded that this object was found in Karataš (*Diana*).

<sup>4</sup> Behrens, 1950, 10, 11. 1–2; Böhme, 1972, 27–29, Abb. 1. 5–8.

<sup>5</sup> Pröttel, 1991, 349–350, Abb. 1. 9–11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 349–353, Abb. 1. 11; 11.

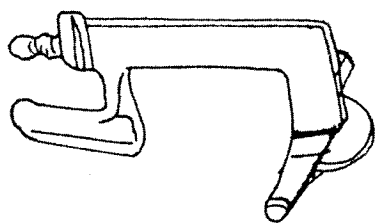


Fig 1. Fibula, Mainz-Dimesser Ort

Сл. 1. Фибула, Mainz-Dimesser Ort

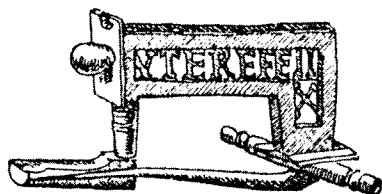


Fig. 2. Fibula, Danube valley

Сл. 2. Фибула, Подунавље

holder and long hinged frame. They originated around AD 200 from the variant of military fibulae and during the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century they spread from Britain via Holland, Germany, Austria and Hungary as far as Dura-Europos in Syria, and their specimens are particularly numerous in the fortifications along the Rhine limes.<sup>7</sup> From those simple bronze specimens evolved silver, gold-plated and gold fibulae of this type, with more massive twice bent bow of rectangular or polygonal section that instead as stylized animal head terminates as profiled button-like protrusion.

#### 1. Mainz-Dimesser Ort, Fig. 1

silver

Fibula with twice bent undecorated bow of rectangular section, terminating as button-shaped protrusion. The ends of long hinged frame are molded and at its junction with bow there is semicircular plate.

Lit: Böhme, 1972, Abb. 1. 5.

#### 2. Danube valley (?), Nissen Collection, Fig. 2

silver, gold-plated

Fibula with twice bent undecorated bow of rectangular section, terminating as button-shaped protrusion. The ends of long hinged frame are molded and terminate as underdeveloped onion bulbs. Along the middle of lateral side of the bow is the inscription VTERE FELIX, in the openwork technique.

Lit: Behrens, 1950, 10, Abb. 13. 9; Böhme, 1972, Abb. 1. 6.

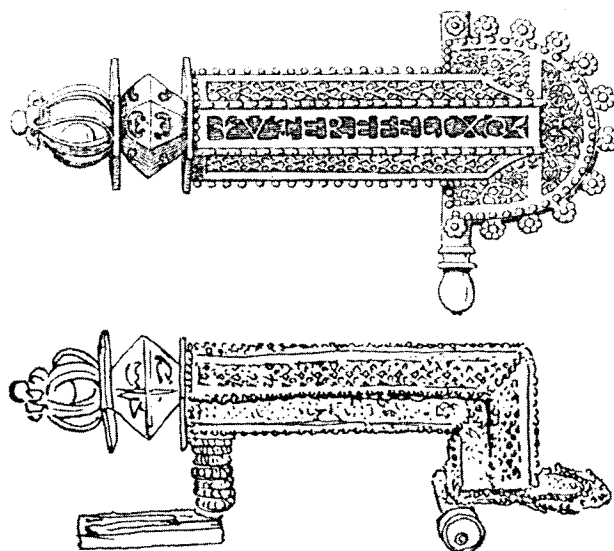


Fig. 3. Fibula, Osztrópataka

Сл. 3. Фибула, Osztrópataka

#### 3. Osztrópataka, find I, Fig. 3

gold

length 98 mm, weight 71, 8 gr.

Fibula with twice bent bow of hexagonal section terminating as double molded polygonal and button-like protrusion. The ends of hinged frame are molded and finished with spherical onion bulbs and at the junction of hinge and bow there is semicircular plate framed by rosettes made of large granules. On the upper surface of the bow is the inscription VTERE FELIX in the *opus interrasile* technique, with leaf at the beginning and volute at the end. The entire surface of the bow and circular plate on the head is decorated with open vegetable and geometric motifs, volute foliage, branches, small leaves, rhombs and spirals made in the *opus interrasile* technique. The catchplate is short and decorated with horizontal grooves and pin holder is of trough shape.

Lit: Armeth, 1850, 118, Taf. G. IX; Hampel, 1885, 150, Abb. 71; Rigel, 1901, 143, Taf. 16. 4-6; Behrens, 1950, 10, Abb. 13. 10; Böhme, 1972, Abb. 1. 7; Noll, 1974, F4, Abb. 45; Pröttel, 1991, 349-350, Abb. 1.11; Bernhard-Walcher et al., 1994, Nr. 254; Yeroulanou, 1999, 86, Fig. 142, cat. 168.

#### 4. Hallstatt

gold

Fragment of fibula of the same type. The preserved bow is framed with filigree wire and has the inscription VTERE FELIX in the *opus interrasile* technique. On the head is semicircular ornamented plate.

Lit: Morton, 1967, 56, Abb. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Böhme, 1972, 28-29, Fundliste 29; Pröttel, 1991, 349-350, Abb. 1. 9-11.

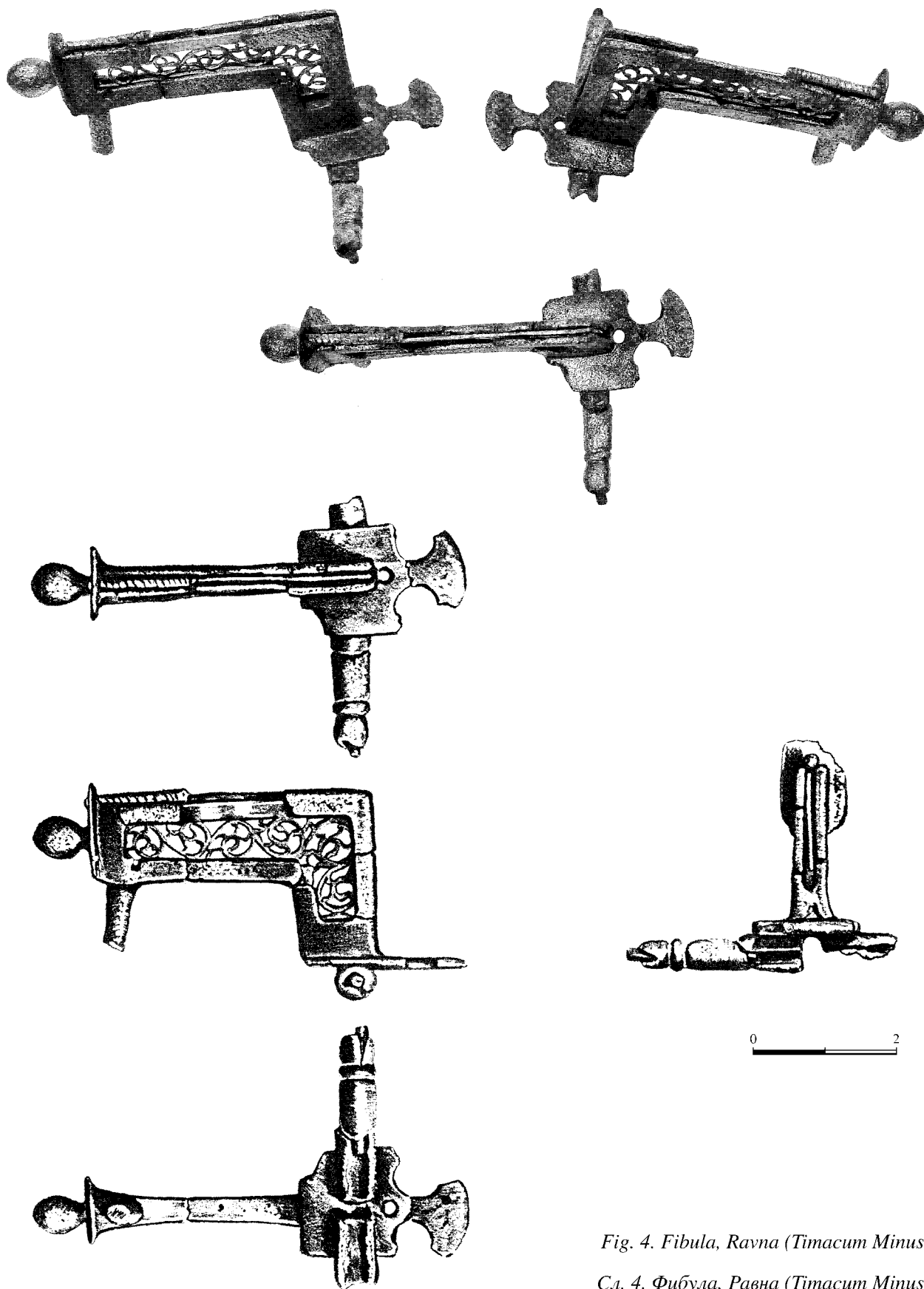


Fig. 4. Fibula, Ravna (Timacum Minus)

Сл. 4. Фибула, Равна (Тимачум Минус)

**5. Ravna (*Timacum Minus*), site »Ropinski potok«, cremation burial, Fig. 4**

silver

dim. 49 x 33 mm

The bow fragment shaped as letter L and ending in elliptical plate with pyriform protrusion, head fragment with setting for hinge spring, plate of palmette shape from the top of the head and fragmented pin with amber bead are preserved of the fibula with twice bent bow. The bow consists of frame into which is inserted silver foil decorated with motifs of stylized volute-shaped foliage with short petioles made in the *opus interrasile* technique. The upper surface of the bow frame is damaged and into the groove at the junction of its front and rear side is inlaid partially preserved twisted silver wire. From the frame next to the catchplate starts vertical support for the pin holder, which is missing.

Lit: Petković, Ružić, Jovanović, Vuksan, Zoffmann (in print).

In spite of the fact that described specimens, according to their basic characteristics, belong to the group of hinged fibulae, some of their elements like small, round onion bulbs at the ends of transversal bar (Danube basin, Osztrópataka), semicircular plate at the junction of bow and bar (Mainz-Dimeser Ort, Hallstatt, Osztrópataka, Ravna) as well as the shape of a catchplate are characteristic of early zwiebelknopf fibulae so this group could be considered as preceding stage in their development.<sup>8</sup> Some specimens made of precious metals as a part of ornamental pattern have inscription expressing the wish for the happiness of their owners UTERE FELIX, that is often encountered on military fibulae and belts during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> Their luxurious manufacture indicates that they were awarded as *donativa* to the meritorious army officers, although it could not be established with certainty on the basis of their archaeological context. Namely, finding circumstances of the specimens from the Danube valley as well as those from the sites Mainz-Dimeser Ort and Hallstatt are not known, while fibula from Osztrópataka originates from one exceptionally rich find discovered in 1790, that in the segment acquired for the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna contains chronologically and culturally heterogeneous material of gold, silver and bronze,<sup>10</sup> suggesting that it had been a treasure hidden in some moment of danger. The fibula itself, which represents one of the masterpieces of the Roman goldsmithery, has been variously determined and dated. There is the opinion that it is Armbrust-hinged fibula from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century<sup>11</sup> then fibula with long hinged frame and twice bent bow,<sup>12</sup> the special variant of type I zwiebelknopf fibulae,<sup>13</sup> or the fibula of type II from the early 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> The discovery of fragmented silver fibula of the identical type in the necropolis at the site »Ropinski potok« near

*Timacum Minus* fortification, offers certain new data on this group of finds.

This fragmented fibula was discovered together with catchplate of bronze cruciform fibula in the elliptical burial pit under the rubble stone structure where also iron nails and two pottery fragments were found. The remains of scorched bones mixed with soot and ash were discovered at the bottom of the pit.<sup>15</sup> The catchplate of bronze fibula found together with the fragment of silver specimen is short (24 mm), decorated with vertical rib and at the end with faceted X-ornament and has trough-shaped pin holder,<sup>16</sup> as it is characteristic of early zwiebelknopf fibulae of type I<sup>17</sup> that is 1. A–B<sup>18</sup> generally dated between 280 (290) and 320 AD.<sup>19</sup> The fragmented silver fibula is exceptional as because of its relatively rare shape, also because of its decoration. Namely, within the bow frame was inserted silver plate decorated with open ornament of stylized volute foliages with small petioles in the *opus interrasile* technique. This decorative technique characteristic of Roman goldsmithery from the 3<sup>rd</sup> up to the 7<sup>th</sup> century had been very rarely used for silver.<sup>20</sup> It was encountered only in decoration of the elements of gold-plated belt garniture from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century discovered in Cologne<sup>21</sup> and only in traces on some silver finger rings<sup>22</sup> while open ornament on the segments of gold-plated silver necklace found in 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century grave in Vinik near Niš<sup>23</sup> was achieved by joining of silver wire and not by openwork. The occurrence of advanced *opus interrasile* ornament on the lateral sides of the bow of this fibula

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 1972, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Bullinger, 1972, 276–283.

<sup>10</sup> The find contains gold torque with molded ornaments, gold bracelet with molded ornaments, discoid fibula with onyx, two gold Germanic fibulae decorated with filigree and granulation, goblet of gold sheet, silver plate with decoration in frieze from the early Empire, silver plate decorated with niello and gold, silver spoon, bronze tripod and silver fibula of the Middle La Tène type. Cf. Noll, 1974, 66–67, Nr. F 1–12, Abb. 44–45; Bernhard-Walcher et al., 1994, Nr. 252–259.

<sup>11</sup> Behrens, 1950, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Böhme, 1972, 29.

<sup>13</sup> Pröttel, 1991, Abb. 1. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Yeroulanou, 1999, 86, Fig. 142, cat. 168.

<sup>15</sup> Petković, Ružić, Jovanović, Vuksan, Zoffmann (in print).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>17</sup> Pröttel, 1991, 349–353, Abb. 1. 1–7.

<sup>18</sup> Keller, 1971, 32–35, Abb. 11. 1, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>20</sup> Ogden, Schmidt, 1990, 10–11.

<sup>21</sup> *Römer am Rhein*, 1967, 311, F 1, Farbtaf. XVI.

<sup>22</sup> Marshall, 1907, nr. 1184 (Chesterford), 1215 (Thebes).

<sup>23</sup> Jovanović, 1978, 47, kat. 9, sl. 81; *Античко сребро / Antique Silver*, 1994, cat. 250.

is even more interesting having in mind that this technique does not have conspicuous tradition in the Danubian provinces and that it had been used on the gold jewelry only on small surfaces, on the frames of earrings and medallions, on clasps or necklace segments.<sup>24</sup> This type of decoration was even on the most luxurious pieces of jewelry discovered in the mausoleum at Šarkamen, and which is supposed to had belonged to the mother of Maximin Daia used in its simplified form like simple or composite palmettes on the edges of necklace medallion created by cutting on the golden foil small surfaces shaped as triangles with acute or rounded corners.<sup>25</sup> As the fibula bow is rather large ornamental surface there was applied more sophisticated motif of volute-shaped foliage, which is usually most often used on large horizontal or arched surfaces of gold bracelets, clasps or pendants. According to the ornaments on the medallion frames of monetary necklaces from the site Naix in France<sup>26</sup> and from Metropolitan Museum,<sup>27</sup> the motif of simple volute-shaped foliages in the *opus interassile* technique was present already on the jewelry from the first decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and as it suggests the necklace from The Field Museum of Natural History from Chicago,<sup>28</sup> it had been in use until the end of this century. Already from the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the foliages are enriched by addition of small petioles and in the second half of this century the motif became more elaborate by addition of peltae, various leaves and fruits. The foliage ornament was not dominant in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and it is combined with various ornamental elements, leaves, grapes or figural motifs. In contrast to other ornaments created in the *opus interassile* technique when on the backside are visible only series of perforated holes, the motif of volute-shaped foliages was not created by piercing but by precise cutting of the foil along the contours of the drawn sketch, so, such ornament was identical from the front and from the back, providing some kind of third dimension.<sup>29</sup> Hence, the plate decorated with this motif could have been inserted in the fibula bow frame so the ornament is visible from both sides. However, although the ornament was executed very precisely, this ornamental system is, according to the richness of motifs as well as according the fineness of manufacture, by far more simple than composite system of geometrical and vegetable motifs applied on the fibula from Osztrópataka. Namely, on the bow of silver fibula from the necropolis near Ravna the motif of volute-shaped foliage is primary like on the 3<sup>rd</sup> century jewelry, while complex decoration of fibula from Osztrópataka reveals all characteristics of luxurious Late Roman

jewelry. Nevertheless, although according to its construction, first of all the thin bow of rectangular section, the fibula from the necropolis near Ravna is closer to the gold-plated fibula from the Danube valley it has according to its decorative traits including inserted plate with *opus interassile* ornament into the frame of twice bent bow the closest analogy with the fibula from Osztrópataka. It is also important to note that both mentioned specimens, one of exceptional and the other of slightly lower quality of manufacture, as well as fibulae from Hallstatt and the Danube valley, have open ornament on the bows, although it is not common for the Roman fibulae. Namely, the *opus interassile* technique is applied on the catchplates (Desana treasure, Ténès treasure, Louvre Museum in Paris, Palatine in Rome, Metropolitan Museum in New York, Apahida treasure, Indiana University Art Museum–Bloomington, Tournai, Reggio Emilia)<sup>30</sup> and exceptionally on the »onion bulbs« (Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna)<sup>31</sup> on the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century gold cruciform fibulae with »onion bulbs«. Only on the fibula from Erickstanebrae in Scotland now in Country Museum of Art in Los Angeles,<sup>32</sup> made on the occasion of Diocletian's *vicennalia* in 303/304, the entire surface was covered with decoration and inscription in the *opus interassile* technique. This information suggests the conclusion that few so far known fibulae with similarly decorated bow had been produced at approximately same time, at the very end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century or in the first years of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

These fibulae made of precious metals and luxuriously decorated could have been awarded to the distinguished persons, either on the occasion of Diocletian's jubilees, or on the occasion of his victories over barbarians and his stay in Pannonia and Moesia. Namely, after successful battles against Alamanni on the upper Danube in 289 and the Sarmatians on the Pannonian and Moesian Danube limes in 289 and 292,<sup>33</sup> Diocletian stayed in Pannonia during 292–294 for rather long time and celebrated there his *decennalia* and organized construction of many fortifications on the right Danube

<sup>24</sup> Popović, 1996, 57–58; 153–154; Popović, 2001, 95; 244–245.

<sup>25</sup> Popović, Tomović, 1998, 298–305, Fig. 16, 18, 19.

<sup>26</sup> Yeroulanou, 1999, cat. 1 (with quoted literature).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, cat. 2 (with quoted literature).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, cat. 7 (with quoted literature).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 84–88.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, cat. 171–179 (with quoted literature).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, cat. 170 (with quoted literature).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, cat. 169 (with quoted literature).

<sup>33</sup> Stein, 1968, 67.

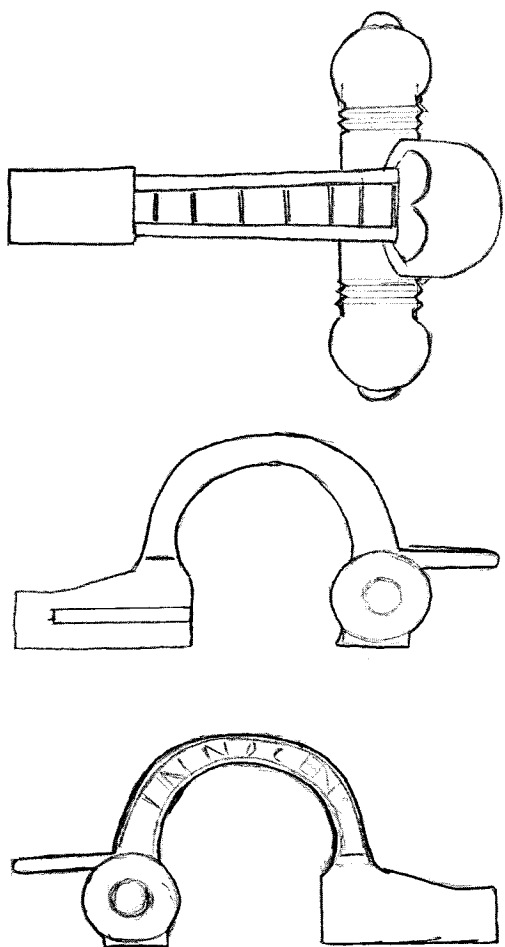


Fig. 5. Fibula, Barboși

Сл. 5. Фибула, Барбоши

bank, and in September 294 on his way from *Sirmium* to *Nicomedia* visited military camps on the Danube frontier.<sup>34</sup> In the end of October AD 294 Diocletian left the Danube banks where three years later Galerius fought with Carpi and Bastarnians. The victory over these tribes brought to all tetrarchs the title *Carpicus maximus* in 297 AD.<sup>35</sup> These historical circumstances indicate that find from Hallstatt and find of valuable fibula in the treasure from Osztrópataka, which contains also some valuables of Germanic provenance<sup>36</sup> could be explained as donations to the army commanders or to the faithful barbarians, while silver fibula from the necropolis by fortification *Timacum Minus* could have been the donation to a member of this garrison who distinguished himself in the battles against barbarians or to the veteran recruited from this area for the battles in Egypt in 295.<sup>37</sup> Of course, it is

not possible to exclude the possibility that silver fibula was a present, which sometime later Galerius or Maximin Daia donated to the member of faithful Illyrian troops. In any case, the production of this fibula, typologically related to the earlier bronze specimens with twice bent bow, could be limited to the period between final decade of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the middle of the second decade of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This as chronological framework also corresponds with another find from the same grave, the bronze *zwiebelknopf* fibula of which only the catchplate was preserved.

### FIBULAE WITH THIN STRAP BOW, UNDERDEVELOPED LATERAL ONION BULBS AND HEAD SHAPED AS CIRCULAR PLATE

The fibulae of this group belong to the early forms of *zwiebelknopf* fibulae characterized by thin strap bow.<sup>38</sup> For the time being only gold specimens from the sites in eastern Serbia and Romania are known and some of them are classified as type I of *zwiebelknopf* fibulae.<sup>39</sup>

#### 1. Barboși, grave 7/1978, Fig. 5 gold

The cruciform fibula with strap bow of rectangular section. On the upper surface of the bow is a band with niello inlays and on the lateral side is incised inscription INNOCENS. The lateral onion bulbs are of spherical shape and in place of the central bulb is semicircular plate decorated with incised ornament of stylized pelta.

Lit: Sanie, 1981, 83, Pl. 68. 4–5.

#### 2. La Ostrov gold

The cruciform fibula with strap bow, spherical lateral onion bulbs and semicircular plate in place of the central bulb.

Lit: Romanilor, 1980, Abb. 779.

#### 3. Karataš (*Diana*), necropolis (?), Fig. 6 gold

dim. 44 x 43 mm; weight 5, 80 gr.

The cruciform fibula with strap bow of rectangular section and with hexagonal lateral bar with molded ends and with underdeveloped bulbs. In place of the central bulb is rather small semi-

<sup>34</sup> Seston, 1946, 131–132.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>36</sup> Noll, 1974, 66–67, F 1, 2, 5, 6; Bernhard-Walcher et al., 1994, Nr. 252, 253, 255, 256.

<sup>37</sup> Seston, 1946, 132, 142.

<sup>38</sup> Pröttel, 1991, 349.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, Anm., 26, 29.

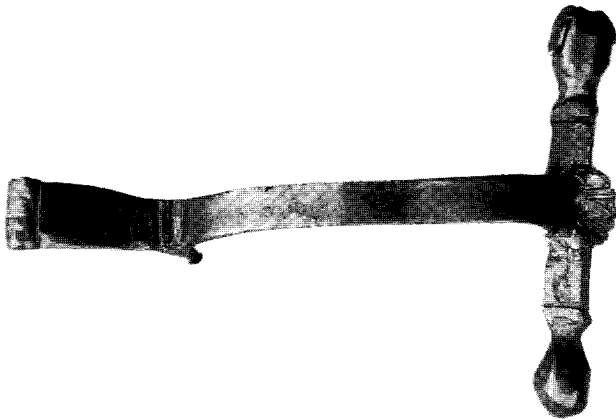


Fig. 6. Fibula, Karataš (Diana)

Сл. 6. Фибула, Караџац (Диана)



Fig. 7. Fibula, Danube valley

Сл. 7. Фибула, Подунавље

circular plate of palmette shape and decorated with incisions. The catchplate is rectangular, decorated at the end with incisions. Pin is missing.

Lit: *Старе културе*, 1969, 164, Т. LXIII; Јанковић, 1981, 247, Т. XIII, 3; Popović, 2003, 67, fig. 24.

#### 4. Danube valley (?), Fig. 7

gold

dim. 52 x 36 mm; weight 21, 45 gr.

The cruciform fibula with strap bow of trapezoidal section and lateral bar of hexagonal section framed at the ends with gold wire worked as beads. Lateral bulbs are underdeveloped and of spherical shape. In place of the central bulb is semispherical plate framed with gold wire worked as beads, creating the ornament of stylized pelta. The catchplate is short, decorated with incisions while the pin is missing.

Lit: Popović, 1996, cat. 147.

The specimens of this group, according to their typological characteristics, belong certainly to the zwiebelknopf fibulae. The substitution of central bulb with semicircular plate was encountered also on some specimens of the previous group (Mainz-Dimesser Ort, Osztropataka) and this confirms their typological connections. The origin of this constructive characteristic should be perhaps looked for among the shapes with triangular plate on the head and lateral bulbs in the initial phase of development. Those forms are quite numerous on the Germanic limes and in Pannonia and they are classified in the accompanying variant of the Armbrust fibula type.<sup>40</sup> There are as prephase in the evolution of the zwiebelknopf fibulae the bronze specimens with lateral bulbs in the initial phase of development and semicircular plate on the head, as is the specimen from castellum Saalburg.<sup>41</sup> To the next

phase of development of these fibulae belong the golden specimens characterized by the traits of the first type of zwiebelknopf fibulae, i.e. smaller, round bulbs and thin strap bow<sup>42</sup> usually of rectangular section. Somewhat more developed shape of the bow is encountered on the specimen from the Danube valley where the bow although of trapezoidal section is still rather thin. All specimens have semicircular plate on the fibula head decorated with stylized peltae or palmette made of beaded wire, or by cutting and engraving of the golden foil. These are anyway common motifs and techniques applied on ornamental objects of the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century. The fibulae of this group that are made exclusively of gold have been registered within geographically rather limited area in the Serbian and Romanian Danube valley. The specimen from the site Barboși, near *Dinogetia*, was found in a grave with three coins of Claudius Gothicus (268–270).<sup>43</sup> This suggests the conclusion that this relatively small series of typologically very close fibulae had been produced during rather short period of time and awarded to the meritorious military persons engaged in operations during Aurelian's withdrawal from Dacia, and this was by all appearances long-lasting process taking place between 268 and 275 AD.<sup>44</sup> This period is at the same time chronological framework for the origin of the fibulae of this group.

<sup>40</sup> Kovrig, 1937, 171, 175, 183.

<sup>41</sup> Böhme, 1972, 27, Nr. 823.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 349; Keller, 1971, 32–33.

<sup>43</sup> Sanie, 1981, 83.

<sup>44</sup> Protase, 1980, 253–265.

**FIBULAE WITH RIDGED BOW,  
UNDERDEVELOPED LATERAL BULBS  
AND HEAD SHAPED  
AS SEMICIRCULAR PLATE**

The fibulae of this group made of gold, silver and gold-plated bronze originate from the bronze specimens with protuberances on the bow registered at the sites in Britannia (Caerleon, Corbridge)<sup>45</sup> and Germania (Burghöfe)<sup>46</sup> and with variants encountered even at Dura Europos in Syria.<sup>47</sup>

**1. Trier**, necropolis St. Paulin, Fig. 8  
bronze, gold-plated

The fibula bow consists of four ridges accentuated on the top with gold wire worked as beads. The bar is hexagonal framed at the ends with gold beaded wire. The lateral bulbs are pyriform and in place of the central bulb is semicircular plate encircled with beaded gold wire making the ornament of stylized pelta. The same motif is in the central segment of semicircular plate. The catchplate is rectangular, decorated with two molded ribs and the pin is missing.

Lit. Böhme, 1972, Abb. 1.8; Trier, 1984, 111, Nr. 31c; Pröttel, 1991, 349–350, Abb. 1.10.

**2. Cologne**, grave find, Aldenkirchen Collection, Fig. 9  
silver

length 65 mm

The fibula bow consists of four ridges accentuated on the top with silver wire worked as beads. The bar is hexagonal, molded at the ends and terminates in scarcely developed lateral onion bulbs. In place of central bulb is semicircular plate encircled with beaded silver wire. The catchplate is short decorated along the middle with molded rib. The pin is inserted into trough-like pin holder.

Lit: Franken, 1998, 279, Abb. 4.

**3. Blace**, site »Jaz«, Fig. 10

gold

dim. 51 x 38 mm; weight 42, 30 gr.

The fibula bow consists of four very prominent ridges accentuated on the top with rows of large granules. The transversal bar is of hexagonal section, molded at the ends and terminating into scarcely developed lateral onion bulbs. In place of central bulb is semicircular plate framed with the row of large granules. The junction of bow and plate head is marked also by the row of granules. At the point where bow transforms into a catchplate there is multicoiled gold wire. The catchplate is short decorated with horizontal grooves. The pin is missing.

Lit: Trбуховић, 1979, 67–72; Popović, 2001, cat. 83.

According to certain elements as is the semicircular plate on the head, these fibulae are related to the specimens from both previous groups, but molded bow is the characteristic registered on bronze specimens from Britannia and Germania, so these fibulae are of com-

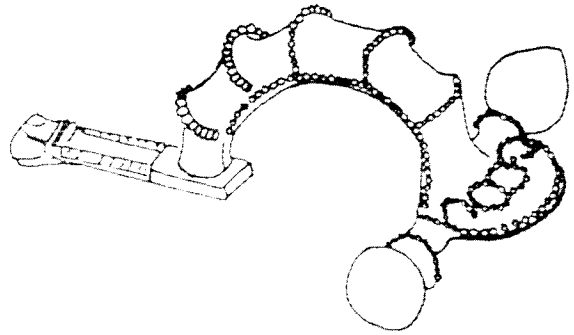


Fig. 8. Fibula, Trier

Сл. 8. Фибула, Тријер

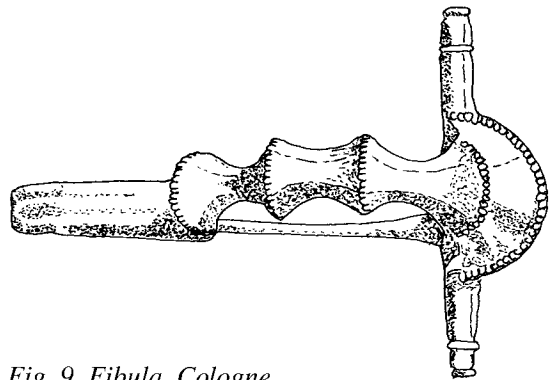


Fig. 9. Fibula, Cologne

Сл. 9. Фибула, Келн

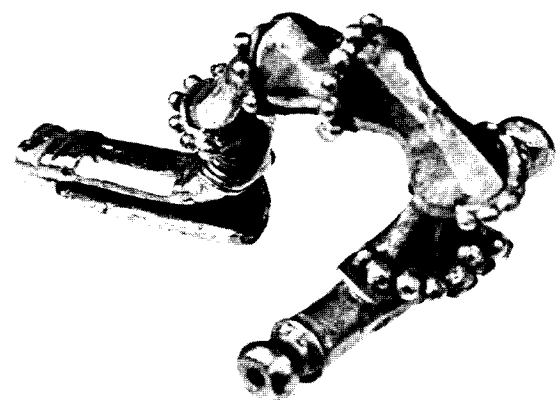


Fig. 10. Fibula, Blace

Сл. 10. Фибула, Блаце

<sup>45</sup> Böhme, 1972, Abb. 1. 2, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Pröttel, 1991, 350, Abb. 1. 9.

<sup>47</sup> Friche, Toll, 1949, 56, T. XII, 82–83.



posite shape. All three so far known specimens are made of precious metals, bronze with thick layer of gilding, silver and gold and richly decorated with beaded wire or the rows of rather large granules. These fibulae were certainly intended for the imperial *donativa* to the high-ranking persons in the army or in the civil service. Their distinctive shape as well as the exceptional similarity in structural and ornamental characteristics suggests the conclusion that although found in Germania and First Moesia, the reason for their donation and hence their production should be considered within the same historical context. Although it could be assumed that fibula from Blace near Prokuplje, as well as silver plates with inscribed LICINI AVGVSTAE SEMPER VINCAS and *vota* inscription SIC X SIC XX<sup>48</sup> was produced in *Naissus* on the occasion of celebration of Licinius' *decennalia* we think it more probable that this fibula was produced for Constantine's donations after victory over Licinius at *Campus Ardiensis* in Thrace in December of 316.<sup>49</sup> Considering that there are the closest analogies with fibulae from Cologne and Trier that were probably donated on the occasion of Constantine's *decennalia* on 25<sup>th</sup> of July 315 as a reward for loyalty in the battles against the Germans on the Rhine limes in spring of 313<sup>50</sup> it could be assumed that some of the masters from the Trier workshop that produced objects for this celebration had been transferred to *Naissus* after Constantine's triumph over Licinius. There, together with local craftsmen they produced objects intended for the persons meritorious for Constantine's penetration towards *Serdica* leading to his victory over his opponent at *Campus Ardiensis*. The written sources, however, do not mention any battles of Constantine's troops during the penetration towards *Serdica* but it does not mean that there were no clashes at all. For Constantine the taking of *Naissus*, his hometown, was certainly of utmost importance, especially because there were located the workshops for production of objects of official character and there had been produced silver plates intended for Licinius' *decennalia* and which he probably awarded to the meritorious military commanders before leaving the town.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that in the battle for *Naissus* some army units went over to Constantine, helping thus his entering the town and further thrust to the east, so the emperor rewarded officers of such units for special merits or representatives of town administration who influenced such attitude of the army with luxurious gold fibulae. The find of two gold finger rings with inscription FIDEM CONSTANTINO in the neighboring *Remesiana*<sup>52</sup> could be explained as a consequence of same

circumstances. Those rings were most probably produced in the *Naissus* workshop<sup>53</sup> where same masters also produced the plates for Licinius' *decennalia*. Those masters, like the ones from the *Sirmium* workshop, continued their activity also under Constantine and his successors making according to need the objects of official character. However, stylistic unity of the fibula from Blace with fibulae from Cologne and Trier indicate the assumption that besides local masters there had been working the craftsmen brought from imperial workshop in Trier, that produced objects of official character until Constantine's campaign and battle with Licinius in the autumn-winter of 316. Constantine could have awarded the fibulae and »fidelity rings« already on his return from Thrace when on the way to *Siscia* where he stayed with his court in the beginning of 317<sup>54</sup> he passed through *Naissus*. The other possibility is that Constantine donated these gold objects to meritorious persons during some later visit, and his first stay in *Naissus* is not confirmed prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 319 (CTh II, 15, 1; 16, 2). Thus, the fibulae of this distinctive group had been produced in the imperial workshop in Trier for the Constantine's *decennalia* in 315 and the next year in *Naissus* as *donativa* after the victory over Licinius.

\* \* \*

The fibulae of precious metals that are, according to typological characteristics, classified into three basic groups, belong to specific variants of the first type of zwiebelknopf fibulae or in case of the first group to its prephase. They are characterized by not only the precious metal of which they are made and semicircular plate shaped as pelta or palmette on the head, but also by lavish decoration executed by various goldsmiths' techniques, so it is most probable that those were the objects intended for imperial *donativa*. The attempt to

<sup>48</sup> Античко сребро / *Antique Silver*, 1994, cat. 268, 269, 342–344 (with literature).

<sup>49</sup> For the chronology of Constantine's conflict with Licinius and different opinions on this problem, cf. Bruun, 1961.

<sup>50</sup> Immediately after agreement with Licinius in Milan in the beginning of 313, Constantine went to war against Germanic tribes at the Rhine limes and he finished it successfully, cf. Stein, 1968, 92.

<sup>51</sup> This is also the opinion of Mirković, 1997, 145–158 (with bibliography on problems concerning the dating of Licinius' *decennalia* and production of imperial *donativa* for this occasion).

<sup>52</sup> Popović, 2000 (2001), 187–196.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>54</sup> Bruun, 1968, 55, 102.

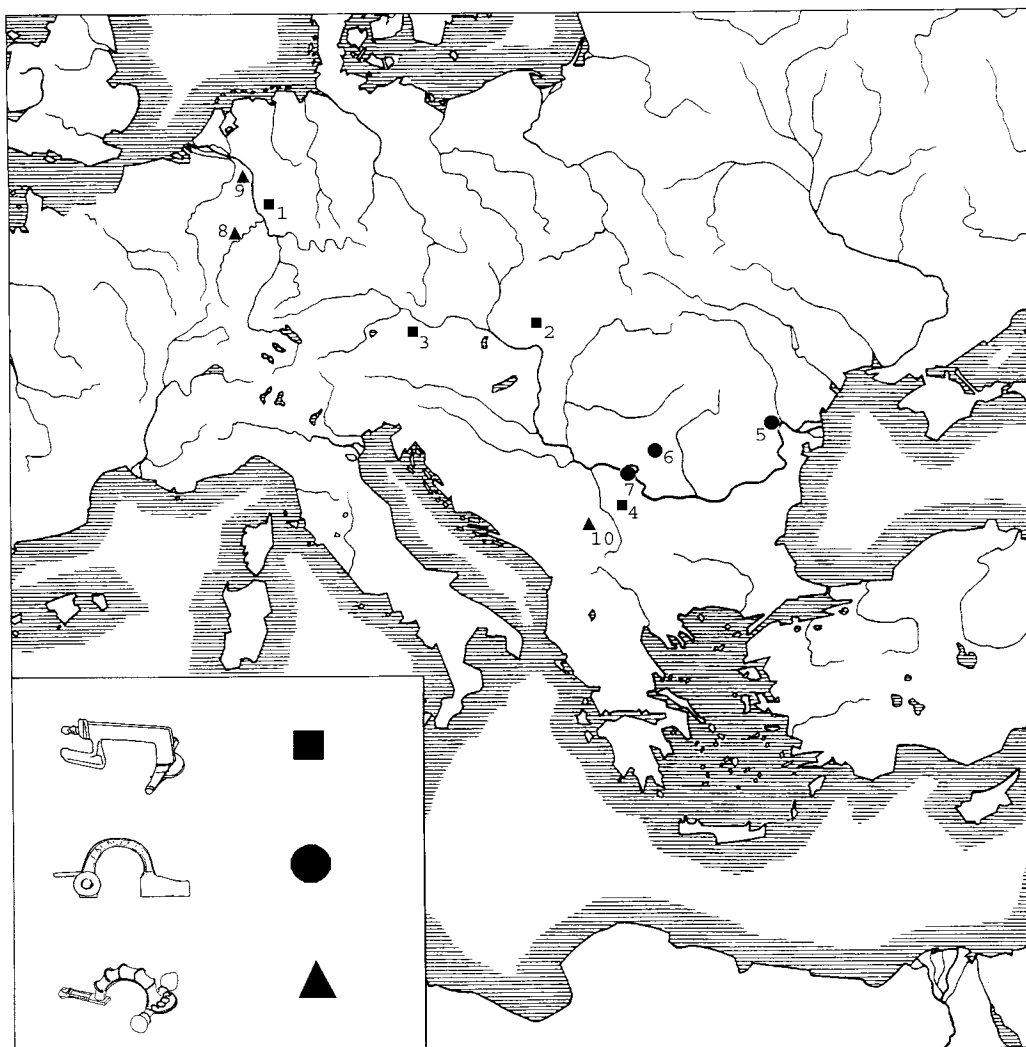


Fig. 11. Finds of specific variants of gold and silver early zwiebelknopf fibulae:

1) Mainz-Dimesser Ort; 2) Osztrópataka; 3) Hallstatt; 4) Timacum Minus; 5) Barboși; 6) La Ostrov;  
7) Diana; 8) Trier; 9) Cologne; 10) Blace

Сл. 11. Налази специфичних варијанти златних и сребрних раних луковичастих фибула:

1) Мајнз-Димесер Орт; 2) Оштропатка; 3) Халштат; 4) Тимакум Минус; 5) Барбоши; 6) Ла Остров;  
7) Диана; 8) Тријер; 9) Колн; 10) Блаце

place them within appropriate historical context, which, nevertheless should be regarded with caution, is justified by geographic distribution of the finds (Fig. 11). Namely, these are the fibulae that evolved from simple bronze specimens encountered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> century sites in Britain and at Rhine limes. As the importance of Pannonian–Balkan provinces increased during historical events in the final decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and in the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the luxurious gold and silver specimens from Germania reached the Danube basin where at the same time emerged imperial residen-

ces with memorial complexes and from time to time there also resided the imperial court with workshop and mint.

From the chronological point of view the earliest group of these finds are gold fibulae with strap bow and circular plate on the head (Group II), produced and awarded to the military commanders distinguished in operations in the process of withdrawal from Dacia in 268–275. This early variant of zwiebelknopf fibulae, dating before introduction of strict control of production of objects for the court, could have been produced

in some local artisan center not far from the military actions, thus making easier their distribution. The important workshops whose production could be followed during long period of time existed in *Naissus* and probably in *Aquae* that was an important Danube port. However, we should not overlook the goldsmith's workshop in *Timacum Minus* in the village Ravna near Knjaževac that was close to the Danube frontier. The activity of this workshop was confirmed already in the end of the 1st century, when its products intended for imperial propaganda reached the left Danube bank.<sup>55</sup> After Trajan's conquest of Dacia this castellum lost its strategic importance, so in that time there are no significant data about the activity of its artisan center. When the military units were evacuated from Dacia the fortification gained in importance once again, so we could assume the restoration of toreutic workshops within it. This possibility is of particular interest because one fibula (group I) of specific manufacture was discovered at the necropolis in the vicinity. It is the fibula with bent bow created by silver plate decorated in the *opus interrasile* technique, which is exceptionally rare on the silver objects. By all appearances it was a local product, which by its decorative system imitates much more luxurious fibula from Osztrópataka in Slovakia. Both specimens are, in our opinion, donations on the occasion of Diocletian's jubilees in 293 and 303/304, or his victories in conflicts with Alemanni in 289, Sarmatians in 289 and 292 and Carpi in 297, or they are related to the emperor's sojourns in Pannonia and Moesia when the limes on middle and lower Danube had been reorganized. The atypical decoration of fibula from the Ravna necropolis distinguishes from other valuable objects from this region as on the local gold jewelry lacy cutting of metal in the simple variants was used only on limited surfaces. This fibula made after the model still reveals that local artisans mastered the technique of cutting and piercing of engraved ornament on the metal foil using small chisels with triangular blades.<sup>56</sup> This fibula, along with the necklace from

Vinik, confirms that openwork ornament usually characteristic of the gold adornments was employed also on the silver jewelry in the local workshops. However, judging by so far discovered objects the tradition of these skills was not strong, as we do not encounter the use of such skills on the valuables from the later periods. The *opus interrasile* was used only in greatly reduced form for decoration of medallion frame of the composite necklace from the Šarkamen treasure. This necklace, however, has best analogies in the jewelry depicted on a fresco from the ceiling of the main auditorium in Trier, where is represented a young woman from the Constantine's close circle.<sup>57</sup> This direct analogy might speak in favor of conclusion that Šarkamen jewelry, and possibly the fibula from the Ravna necropolis, had been produced in the *Naissus* workshop as connections of this workshop with goldsmiths' centers in the west, first of all in Trier, are confirmed in the middle of second decade of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Namely, in addition to other objects of official character the repertoire of the *Naissus* workshop included also the fibulae among which is in our opinion also the gold specimen from Blace near Prokuplje. This fibula, which is analogous with fibulae from Trier and Cologne (group III) although of somewhat more luxurious manufacture, confirms close connections between imperial workshops in Trier and *Naissus* during Constantine's preparations for final clash with Licinius. For this very event was intended considerable portion of production of these centers. Although connections between goldsmiths' centers in Trier and *Naissus* are not clearly confirmed in the period before the reign of Licinius and Constantine, the finds of distinctive fibulae of precious metal in the eastern Serbia probably indicate such connections. In any case, these are very significant finds as for the study of local goldsmithery also for more comprehensive understanding of historical circumstances in the time when this region was the stage for events crucial for the future of the Empire.

<sup>55</sup> Поповић, 2001a, 377–382.

<sup>56</sup> For the technique of manufacture and tools used for *opus interrasile* ornaments cf. Ogden, Schmidt, 1990, 5–8.

<sup>57</sup> Popović, Tomović, 1998, 298–305, Fig. 9.

